

REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the Office Action dated February 24, 2004 in conjunction with a Request for Continued Examination. Claims 1-10 and 12-14 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 11, 15, 18 and 22 have been amended for reasons of proper antecedent basis only, and new Claims 23-26 have been added. A Petition for a three-month extension of time is submitted herewith. A Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement is submitted herewith. Also, enclosed herewith is a copy of the Electronic Information Disclosure Statement filed August 20, 2004. A check in the amount of \$1,720.00 is submitted herewith to cover the cost of the Request for Continued Examination, three-month extension of time and the new Claims. Please charge deposit account No. 02-1818 for any insufficiency or to credit any overpayment.

Claim Objections

The Office Action objected to Claim 9, citing the following as informalities: the claim recites "the bonus event" in line 4 of the claim. The Office Action stated that this limitation lacks antecedent basis, and appropriate correction is required. Applicants have canceled such Claim for the reasons provided below, and Applicants respectfully submit that such cancellation overcomes such rejection.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §102

The Office Action rejected Claims 1-9 and 12-14 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,439,993 to O'Halloran ("O'Halloran"). The Office Action states, among other things, that O'Halloran teaches a method involving:

... randomly selecting between zero and a maximum number of viewable symbol positions as a wild symbol position (col. 3, lines 37-44 teaches that the number of expanding wild card symbols can be in the range of 1 to n-1 where n is the number of reels- this has been interpreted as meeting the instant invention of between zero and fewer than a maximum number of viewable symbol positions).

Upon Applicants' review of O'Halloran, Applicants have not found any disclosure or teaching of such a method. O'Halloran discloses a gaming machine having a reel

game with a plurality of symbols. When a predetermined event occurs, the gaming machine substitutes wild card symbols for original symbols. The wild card symbols are used to form winning combinations. With respect to Claims 1-9 and 12-14, O'Halloran's gaming machine does not select symbol positions as wild symbol positions, nor does O'Halloran disclose converting wild symbol positions to wild symbols. For these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that O'Halloran does not anticipate the invention defined by Claims 1-9 and 12-14.

Nonetheless, in order to advance the prosecution of this application, Applicants have canceled Claims 1-9 and 12-14 without prejudice or disclaimer, and Applicants have submitted new Claims 23-26 in an effort to clarify the claim language. Because Claim 1 has been canceled, Applicants have amended Claims 19-21 to make such Claims depend, directly or indirectly, from Claim 11.

New Claim 23 (and Claims 24-26 which depend therefrom) are directed to a gaming device including a game operable upon a wager. The game includes a plurality of reels. Each of the reels defines a plurality of locations for a plurality of symbols. The reels display a plurality of different combinations of the symbols after the reels are spun multiple times. The gaming device includes a plurality of winning conditions associated with a plurality of the combinations and an award associated with each one of the winning combinations. Also, the gaming device includes a triggering event that occurs when a designated one or more of the symbols is displayed during the game. The gaming device includes a processor in control of the display device. The processor is operable to: (a) determine if the triggering event occurs; (b) designate a plurality of the locations of the reels as wild if the triggering event occurs; (c) visually distinguish the designated locations from the other locations; (d) treat each of the symbols displayed at each one of the designated locations as a wild symbol so as to increase a possibility of meeting at least one of the winning conditions; (e) determine if any of the winning conditions are present, taking the wild symbols into account; and (f) provide the player with the awards associated with any of the winning conditions that are present. Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 23-26 are in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

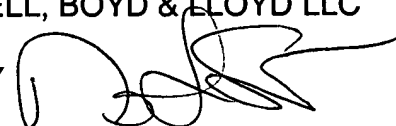
The Office Action stated that Claims 11 and 15-22 are allowed. In reviewing Claims 11 and 15-22, Applicants found certain instances of improper antecedent basis. Applicants have amended Claims 11, 15, 18 and 22 for antecedent basis reasons only. Applicants have not changed the breadth of such Claims nor have Applicants added any subject matter to such Claims. Applicants have submitted herewith a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement, and Applicants respectfully request the consideration of the references cited therein.

An earnest endeavor has been made to place this application in condition for formal allowance and in the absence of more pertinent art, such action is courteously solicited. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Response, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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